

Statement on the Situation in Kenya
January 7, 2008

I welcome the visit of African Union Chairman John Kufuor to Nairobi to help facilitate a dialog to resolve Kenya's political crisis. I condemn the use of violence as a political tool and appeal to both sides to engage in peaceful dialog aimed at finding a lasting political solution. The Government of Kenya has acknowledged that voting irregularities have occurred, and the Orange Democratic Movement has pledged to refrain from further protests that could detract from reconciliation efforts. I now urge both sides to enter this dialog in good faith to earn back the trust of the Kenyan people, who deserve a political process that reflects their dedication to democracy. I remain heartened by the voices of peace that have emerged through Kenya's robust media and civil society. The United States supports their efforts to continue to hold their political leaders to account.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Abdullah Gul of Turkey
January 8, 2008

President Bush. It's been my honor to welcome the President of Turkey here. Mr. President, I'm glad you're here. This is not his first trip to Washington. I can remember many a time you sitting in the Oval Office as the Foreign Minister, and now you come representing the—representing a great strategic partner as its President.

Turkey is a strategic partner of the United States. Relations between the United States and Turkey are important for our country. And we have worked hard to make them strong, and I believe they are strong. We deal with common problems.

One such problem is our continuing fight against a common enemy, and that's terrorists and such a common enemy as the PKK. It's an enemy to Turkey; it's an enemy to Iraq; and it's an enemy to people who want to live in peace. The United States is—along with Turkey, are confronting these folks. And we will continue to confront them for the sake of peace.

I strongly believe that Europe will benefit with Turkey as a member of the European Union. I have held this position ever since I've been the President. I feel it as strongly today as when I first articulated it. I think Turkey sets a fantastic example for nations around the world to see where it's possible to have a democracy coexist with a great religion like Islam. And that's important. I view Turkey as a bridge between Europe and the Islamic world, a constructive bridge. And so I believe it's in the interests of peace that Turkey be admitted into the EU.

We talked about energy and the need for all of us to help secure more energy supplies. We talked about—I'm about to brief the President on my trip to the Middle East. I know he's deeply concerned about whether or not it's possible to achieve a two-state solution in the Middle East. I believe it is, and I'm looking forward to sharing the strategy.

All in all, we've had a very constructive conversation, and that's what you'd expect when you're—when two friends are in the room together.

So, Mr. President, thank you for coming, and welcome.

President Gul. Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to thank the President for his invitation here. Turkey and the United States are longstanding allies, and the relationship between our two countries continue to be strengthened. We have a—we share a common vision, and we work together. And the relations between the two countries are such that they have an impact not only on the two countries but also on a regional and global scale.

Our relations are important, and we will continue to work together to ensure that peace, stability, and prosperity continue to grow around the world. And we are also working against our common enemy, the PKK, and we have once again underlined the importance of our cooperation in fighting against the PKK. And I would like to thank the President for his determination, as well, on this regard.

As the President has said, we have discussed some other important issues such as energy and the issues with respect to the Middle East. The President is engaged very

much in efforts to ensure peace in the Middle East, and we believe that these are important efforts which can yield results.

We've also discussed Iraq, and we will continue to discuss issues such as Iraq, the Balkans, and other issues. And I would like to thank the President for this meeting very much.

President Bush. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:54 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. President Gul spoke in Turkish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

**Remarks Following a Video
Teleconference With Iraq Provincial
Reconstruction Team Leaders and
Brigade Combat Commanders and
an Exchange With Reporters**

January 8, 2008

The President. Thank you very much. I had a series of good meetings today to discuss the situation in Iraq, including a video teleconference this morning with General Petraeus, Ambassador Crocker, and members of the national security team. I also spoke by video with Prime Minister Maliki to discuss the return of the Iraqi Parliament that—it was clear from my discussions that there's great hope in Iraq, that the Iraqis are beginning to see political progress that is matching the dramatic security gains for the past year. There's still work to be done, but it was a very hopeful conversation.

Today I just had a good discussion with some of our bravest citizens, members of our Nation's Provincial Reconstruction Teams and their brigade commanders in Iraq, three of whom are with me today, along with the Secretary and Deputy Secretary. I thank you all for coming. And the others were by SVTS, by video from Baghdad. I first of all thanked them for the progress they've helped make possible during the past year and the important work that they're doing in the communities all across Iraq.

Provincial Reconstruction Teams are called PRTs, are a central part of the new strategy in Iraq that I announced a year ago. The strategy was built around three key elements: first was a surge of additional troops

into Iraq, with a new mission to protect the Iraqi people from terrorists, insurgents, and illegal militias; second was a surge of operations that began in June once the troops were in place, with new offenses across the country to drive the terrorists and militias out of their strongholds; and third was a surge of Provincial Reconstruction Teams, was a civilian surge, which deployed across Iraq to ensure the military progress was quickly followed up with real improvements in the daily lives of the Iraqi citizens.

Over the past year, we've doubled the number of PRTs in Iraq. There are now 24 of these teams serving in all 18 Iraqi Provinces. Many are embedded with military units and work closely with our troops to support their operations. Their mission is to help strengthen moderate leaders at the local, municipal, and Provincial level by providing assistance to help create jobs, deliver basic services, and build up local economies. The teams are helping Provincial governments spend their money more effectively. Across the country, these teams are helping to bring Iraqis together so that reconciliation can happen from the ground up.

The leaders I met today updated me on important work they're doing and the progress they have made. For example, our PRT leaders in Baghdad report they have now mentored district councils and public work departments in several neighborhoods, provided funding for generators to help build up local markets, and support a microgrant program to help small businesses reopen across their district in the city.

Our PRT leaders in Kirkuk report that they helped broker a settlement that brought Sunnis back into the Provincial Council after a year-long boycott. They also helped the Provincial government successfully execute the budget, assisted local enterprises with small business loans, and helped establish a major crimes court in a Province—in the Province that is providing citizens with equal justice under the law.

Our PRT leaders in Najaf, which happens to be one of Shi'a Islam's holiest cities, report that they're working with Iraqis to build a modern airport that will allow Shi'a Muslims from around the world to travel to the city on pilgrimage. These PRT leaders briefed us